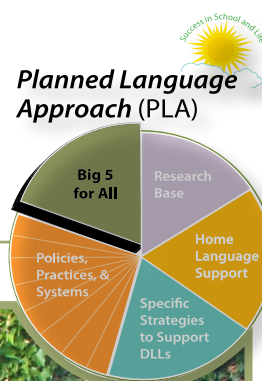


Building Background Knowledge



Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers develop background knowledge as family members and other adults support them as they interact with their home, community, and environment. At the same time, adults are teaching children their language and cultural ways. From these early experiences children store information about themselves, other people, and objects, as well as their families' beliefs, values, rules, and behavioral expectations. Children from different cultures may have large sets of knowledge that adults from other cultures may not be aware of, so it is essential that teachers learn about the unique background knowledge each child has in order to build on these experiences in optimal ways.

- Eight-month-old Juanita touches a soft stuffed animal her mother has given her, and then she touches the hard floor, enjoying feeling the different surfaces at home.

Juanita is developing her knowledge of texture and how to make sense of what she feels!

- When she comes to the Early Head Start (EHS) center, she notices that there are hard and soft surfaces in the classroom and builds on knowledge she has developed at home.

- Min, who is two years and ten months old, is having a picnic with his family at the playground when he sees that his neighbor Miguel is having lunch with his family. Min sees that Miguel also eats rice with his family, even though Miguel's family is eating rice and beans rather than bi bim bap.

Min is developing his knowledge about rice and about different cultures!

- Min tells the home visitor about the rice and beans. The home visitor tells Min that she eats biryani at home, which is also made with rice. Min's mother shares that rice is also in sushi. Together, they all help build Min's background knowledge.



- Four-year-olds Ari and Jean tend their sprouts every day, making sure it gets both sun and water.

Ari and Jean are developing their knowledge about plants, the water cycle, and where food comes from!

- As Ari eats an apple in the classroom, he tells his teacher that his Abba (Daddy) told him apples were also plants and need sun and water.
- Ari's teacher Kia notes that he is continuing to develop his background knowledge of plants. Kia shares a book about apple trees with Ari and his classmates. Kia tells all the children that apple trees grow, just like their sprouts do!



- Five-year-old Alex learns the names and eating habits of fifteen kinds of dinosaurs, an interest he picked up from his 7-year-old brother.

Alex is developing his content knowledge about dinosaurs, learning how to categorize, and becoming enthusiastic about learning and sharing knowledge!

- At Alex's Head Start center, he acts out the different dinosaurs. He carefully stretches out tall or squats down short, depending on how big the dinosaur is. Alex creates drawings of dinosaurs, sometimes relying on books for pictures and the spelling of their names.
- Alex's teachers support his interests by having conversations about dinosaurs. They provide him with materials about dinosaurs, including templates, books, and printouts from the Internet.



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